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SUBJECT: CIAT MEETS WITH ESPACE PRESIDENTIEL OCT 6

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Classified By: AMBASSADOR ROGER MEECE, REASON 1.4 (B/D)

¶1. (C) Summary: The first-ever meeting of the "Espace Presidential" (President plus four vice presidents) with the International Committee to Accompany the Transition (CIAT) was held October 6, albeit without Vice President Bemba, currently in the U.S. Discussion focused on the transition "road map" (reftel), military integration, and election preparations. The military integration discussion noted efforts to arrive at a coordinated plan, and an initiative to form an integrated "Kivu Brigade." Concerns about available finances and a short preparation time for elections were discussed. Ruberwa presented legally-based concerns about the issue of a census, and some of the Congolese comments predictably focused on problems of international financial support. Agreement was reached to establish a follow-up committee, and to consider the establishment of sub-committees, as well as future full Espace Presidential meetings. In general, it was a useful precedent-setting exercise, even with a few sour notes. End summary.

¶2. (C) The International Committee to Accompany the Transition (CIAT) met with President Kabila, three of the four DRC Vice Presidents (VP Bemba is in the U.S.), and the head of the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) October 6. Numerous other presidential staff were also present. The meeting was in response to a very long-standing request from the CIAT to meet with the "Espace Presidential" (President plus four Vice Presidents), never previously successfully realized largely due to the continued deep mistrust felt by the rival leaders in the Transition Government.

¶3. (SBU) Primary topics discussed during the roughly two-hour meeting included the transition "road map," military integration and related questions associated with disarmament and demobilization, election preparations, and modalities for future work. The CIAT had furnished the Congolese officials with its latest iteration of the road map, laying out CIAT expectations for the main four focus areas of the transition (military integration and DDR, disarmament of foreign armed groups, elections, and extension of state authority throughout the DRC - see reftel).

¶4. (C) After opening pleasantries, President Kabila acknowledged receipt of the CIAT road map, and observed that it closely followed the overall structure of the government's own draft road map, although he reported the latter to be far more detailed outlining steps requiring action. He also said that the GDRC road map is to be discussed with a view toward adoption at a Friday, October 8 meeting of the Council of Ministers. By the time the meeting ended, Kabila arranged to distribute to all CIAT members the bulky current draft of the GDRC plan.

¶5. (C) In opening comments, SRSG Bill Swing expressed CIAT pleasure in holding the meeting, noted the need for similar future meetings at regular intervals, and the desire to have established follow-up mechanisms. Swing specifically proposed that another full Espace Presidential meeting should be held linked to the planned late November visit to Kinshasa by members of the U.N. Security Council.

¶6. (C) By prior arrangement, the French Ambassador opened the substantive CIAT presentation by speaking about military integration plans, including successful steps taken to date such as the Belgian-sponsored formation of the integrated Ituri Brigade as a counterpart to the "post-Artemis" MONUC Ituri Brigade. He observed, however, that there has been a lack of a coordinated master plan for overall integration, with little general progress realized to-date and corresponding problems created for demobilization and reintegration plans, as well as for general security. He reported very promising discussions underway to arrive at a more coordinated international community position, and specifically put forward an idea to move quickly to form an integrated "Kivu Brigade." The latter would be consistent with a developing consensus to harmonize currently uncoordinated South African and Belgium proposals, and it could be meshed easily with standing World Bank demobilization plans. In addition, the proposed brigade would be useful to address continuing security concerns in the east, associated in part with a very confused and often contentious current FARDC military structure in the region. As well, it would be fashioned to take on the task of

forcible disarmament of foreign combatants in the area as needed. The French Ambassador further noted that the IMF had indicated that \$75 million has been earmarked in the 2005 budget for military integration (note: an amount which includes the police), although the specific sourcing for these funds has not yet been identified (e.g., international support, GDRC receipts). He expressed optimism that European countries would be in a position to provide significant support in this regard.

¶17. (C) The European Commission Delegate followed with a presentation noting CIAT concerns about pending or recently passed election-related laws, and the potential impact on elections. He reflected widespread concerns about the relatively short time remaining before elections should be held according to the Global and All-Inclusive Accord timetable.

¶18. (C) In the final CIAT statement, the U.K. Ambassador picked up on ideas put forward during the recent senior-level CIAT member meeting in New York, proposing to establish three CIAT sub-committees dealing with security sector reform, election-related legislation, and election planning. He observed that the sub-committees would in no way be conceived to supplant future general "Espace Presidential" meetings.

¶19. (C) Vice President Ruberwa (RCD-Goma) was the first on the Congolese side to react, welcoming the CIAT road map and observing that he and others would need more time to review the document for any inconsistencies with the proposed GDRC document. He noted that DDR is not particularly advanced, but it is ahead of integration efforts in that significant funding has already been found. He further welcomed the proposal to form a Kivu Brigade. On a less positive note, regarding elections, Ruberwa focused on legal concerns about the need for a census prior to elections. He noted that the government had accepted the idea of a voter registration exercise, vice full census, given constraints of time and money but added that an "administrative census" is still needed in order properly to allocate legislative seats and representation. Ruberwa also noted that separate versions of a nationality law passed by the Senate and National Assembly were both "more or less" in accordance with the government's proposals.

¶10. (C) Vice President Zahidi Ngoma (opposition parties) also endorsed the Kivu Brigade initiative, emphasized that Sun City accords should not be rewritten (in terms of election preparations), and expressed general support for the road map, albeit with the caveat that such plans need to be sufficiently flexible to respond to changing conditions. Later, Zahidi expressed concerns that international funding support for elections is insufficient or available only late, threatening timely implementation. Vice President Yerodia, in vintage style, made some opening observations about the good fortune that the CIAT had not been given the label of "FIAT," and that the "Loch Ness monster" of the transition needs adequate international support to ensure that it is controlled.

¶11. (C) In subsequent discussion, President Kabila endorsed the general ideas put forward by the CIAT, and specifically called for a follow-up committee meeting as early as this Saturday, October 9, to address issues raised. SRSG Swing and some CIAT members expressed confidence that adequate funds would be identified for election planning and implementation, but also observed that other elements (e.g., needed laws) additionally need to be in place. There was substantial back-and-forth on the census question, based largely on the implicit recognition by at least the CIAT members that a larger census exercise, even if theoretically desirable, is simply not feasible within the constraints of time and money available. SRSG Swing underscored the principle that the "perfect should not become the enemy of the good."

¶12. (C) Comment: The CIAT had been working to have a meeting of this nature for about a year. Even without Bemba present, and with some of the sour notes struck by some of the Congolese, it was a useful precedent-setting exercise with the various rival Vice Presidents present. The effort by Zahidi and others in essence to set up the international community to take the fall for delayed elections or worse is unhelpful, but very much consistent with long-established Congolese history. It is unlikely to play well this time around, however, because unlike past periods, a broad range of the Congolese population have strong expectations that results will be produced. It is clear that many Congolese leaders recognize that like it or not, they cannot afford to be identified with failure on this front. The CIAT will, of course, continue to push strongly for rapid election progress. Most if not all members recognize that it will be difficult logistically, if for no other reason, to get elections organized by next June, the current target date. It is also accepted by all, however, that it is imperative to provide Congolese politicians no maneuvering room to exploit opportunities to delay. Likewise, the spotlight must remain

on Congolese leaders, and not on the international community, to take responsibility for progress or lack thereof regarding elections. The news regarding GDRC endorsement as early as this week of the government's road map is also a welcome development. End comment.

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